



For Immediate Release

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CENTER REGISTERS DAIRY HERD MANAGER APPRENTICESHIP WITH PA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY

Dairy Producers Can Apply to Be a Host Farm and Employer for Dairy Herd Manager Apprentices

Harrisburg, Pa. – The Center for Dairy Excellence has registered a Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. With many Pennsylvania dairy producers looking for a more skilled workforce in farm-level management, the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program will create opportunities for employees to gain practical knowledge, information, and skills about progressive dairy operations that stretch beyond their familiar past dairy experiences. The Center is currently looking for host farms to serve as an employer for the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program.

“Over the past five years, the Center has heard from PA dairy producers about their need for a more skilled workforce. Dairy farms continue to express challenges in filling this important leadership role within their team,” said Michelle Shearer, Workforce Development Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “According to the PA Department of Labor and Industry, farm managers earned an average of \$59,760 in 2020. A dairy herd manager requires training beyond a high school education, but doesn’t necessarily require a college degree. This makes the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program an exciting opportunity for dairy producers and young dairy professionals alike.”

The goal of the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program is to:

- Provide existing employees on dairy farms, as well as others looking for employment, the opportunity to receive related technical training and on-the-job learning as a Dairy Herd Manager.
- Create opportunities for employees to gain practical knowledge, information, and skills about progressive dairy operations stretching beyond their familiar past dairy experiences.
- Provide an employee with a position on the farm that is financially lucrative and competitive with industry standards.
- Allow existing dairy producers to develop beginner-level employees into well-qualified candidates to serve in herd management roles.
- Provide real farm perspective into what skillsets individuals need to develop to become qualified Dairy Herd Managers on mid- to large-sized dairy farm operations.

“The PA dairy industry has changed over the years, and many farms are seeking knowledgeable and skilled persons who can help manage their herds on a daily basis. Today’s dairy producers perform a wide variety of activities while caring for their animals, and our mid-sized farms often need more than family help to keep everything operating smoothly,” said Phoebe Bitler, dairy producer at Vista Grande Farms, LLC and a member of the Center for Dairy Excellence Board of Directors. “The opportunity for young dairy enthusiasts to ‘learn while they earn’ will allow them to gain experience and a solid foundation – all while being mentored by respected dairy producers. A person who has been licensed through the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship program would be a real asset to a farm seeking this type of employee.”

Dairy producers who are interested in serving as a host farm and employer for the Dairy Herd Manager Apprenticeship Program are expected to operate a progressive, well-managed dairy business with a positive outlook on the industry and an employee who demonstrates interest in enhancing his or her management ability. Host farms must also be willing to expose the employee to all aspects of a successful, progressive dairy operation — including financial information, management team meetings, and adequate training and consultation to achieve learning objectives. Farms must provide a safe working environment and conduct a safety and animal care overview upon the start of the program with the CDE Workforce Development Manager.

Host farms should be able to pay the employee a minimum starting wage of \$11.00 per hour with a progressive wage over 18 months that ends with \$16.00 per hour. This adheres to all federal and state employment requirements. Requested time off, hours of work, and additional details will be determined in collaboration with the farm and employee.

To learn more about the program and apply to be a host farm and employer, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/apprenticeship. Host farm applications will be accepted on a rolling admission basis.

Contact Michelle Shearer at mshearer@centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 570-768-8316 with additional questions.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center’s mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more at centerfordairyexcellence.org.

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